●174
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[Since the Negro population of Haiti is derived primarily from African stock, data pertinent to the continuation, with modifications, of African cultural traits to fit the Haitian pattern will be found in category 178.]

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Mirebalais

both town and district are bisected by the main route between the capitals of the Haitian and the Dominican republics. Yet, once again, this geographical nearness but distorts the psychological distance between Mirebalais and the metropolis. For though the busses, converted from camions, pass to and from the coastal city several times a week, the valley and even the town which is its center drowse in essential isolation. A few hundred yards off the main road find the Haitian peasant following the mode of life of his forebears, oblivious of events outside the valley. Only for a few of the *notables* of the town, the *gros nègres*, who have personal, political, or business contacts with Port-au-Prince, is the comparative proximity to the capital meaningful.

It is not possible to say how long this valley has been inhabited. Certainly the early Indians roamed there; and there, as in other parts of the island of Hispaniola, the tragedy of their extinction under the brutality of early Spanish rule must have taken place. Moreau de St. Mery, to whom all students of Haiti must acknowledge a debt of gratitude for his painstakingly accurate reports of life on the island, gives the derivation of its name.

> "Mirebalais received its name," he says, "because of the enormous numbers of wild animals the first Frenchmen found there, which recalled to them the small district in the region of Poitou [in France], called Mirebalais, where some of them had probably first seen the light of day. These quadrupeds, first introduced by the Spaniards, had no difficulty in multiplying there after the Indians had disappeared from their native land and the Spaniards, reduced in numbers, were obliged to abandon the great plains, so that horses, cattle, etc. came to exercise exclusive domain."[1]

St. Mery's work, which traces the development of Mirebalais as one of the parishes of pre-Revolutionary Haiti, makes it

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been given through its use to substantiate the many charges of cannibalism in Haiti that have been made. Yet those who, desirous of establishing such cannibalism, quote this passage from St. Mery do not always remember to quote it in its complete context:

> " Some of these butchers of human flesh are also brought to Santo Domingo . . . where, as in Africa, they are the horror of the other Negroes, notably of the Congos, who, because of their nearness to them [in Africa], are most exposed to their cruelties." [4]

These are thus the tribes who were presumably the most important in the Negro ancestry of the Haitians of today. Was there any least common denominator in language which made it possible for slaves fresh from Africa to communicate with one another after their arrival in Haiti? Was there sufficient similarity in their cultures so that this might form the basis for a retention of African beliefs and behavior despite the vicissitudes of slavery? And what were the characteristics of the African civilizations of these people?

The picture of West African life, as it is commonly drawn, emphasizes the great number of small tribal groups following dissimilar modes of life, speaking mutually unintelligible languages, and worshipping different gods. In a very general sense this is not untrue. On the face of it, the number of languages that are spoken in the area from which the slaves were derived would seem to have constituted an effective barrier not alone to any concerted action on the part of slaves, but even to communication between them, especially since in many regions of the New World it was a fixed policy to separate slaves from the same tribe.

Yet behind this semblance of sharp dissimilarities lies a basic unity of language and culture in all of West Africa, so that though languages were and are mutually unintelligible, structurally and idiomatically they are much the same. This

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is why Créole, not alone in Haiti, but also in Martinique, in Trinidad, and in Louisiana, like Negro English in other portions of the New World, shows such consistency in structure and idiom. The slaves, having mastered a requisite number of words in the language of their masters, merely poured them into this mold of their own linguistic patterns and, approximating the phonetic values of such words in terms of the West African modes of speech, thus established a means of communication between one another, no matter what their tribal derivation.[8]

The region of West Africa which furnished the slaves was an area of great and settled political entities. Here were to be found the Fula and Mandingo empires in the western portion of the area, and the Hausa kingdom in northern Nigeria; the Ashanti and Fanti states in the Gold Coast, and, to the east, the kingdoms of Dahomey, of Yoruba, and of Benin; southward, those of Kongo and Loango. In all this vast territory law and order reigned, and regimentation of behavior under the direction of kings and priests was the rule. With this went a discipline that so deeply stamps African tradition that even the many years of European dominance have not been able to efface it.

The social life in this area, as well as its political organization, is to a very considerable extent a unit. Polygyny, the institution whereby a man may have more than one wife, is found in the entire region. Everywhere descent is counted on one side of the family, either the male or the female, and the larger significant relationship groupings that are composed of those who regard themselves as descended from a single and often mythical totemic ancestor are equally characteristic. Discipline rules within the family as well as outside it and is exacted from the earliest days in the life of a child. Needless to say, it is a far cry from this ordered state of society to the disorganized life which the stereotype of the "savage African" envisages.

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Despite the influence of Mohammedanism in the north, there are certain similarities in religion to be found everywhere. Even among the Mohammedans, magic is as potent as it ever was, and as St. Mery correctly observed for his time regarding the Mohammedan slaves, the aboriginal gods have by no means been forgotten. On the west coast and in the Congo, however, pagan religions having a degree of complexity which accords with the complexity of the other aspects of these civilizations are found everywhere. Magic constitutes only one aspect of these systems in which pantheons of deities, each pantheon and each member of each pantheon with its special function, are held to control the destinies of the world and of man. The ancestral cult is another important aspect of West African belief, with the spirits of the dead envisaged as living on in another world, yet alert to manifest power for good or evil among their descendants. Not only in cosmology, but in ceremonialism as well are there patterns that characterize all West Africa. The worship of the gods through the dance, and the phenomenon of possession of devotees by their deities; the place of song in worship, and the special character of this music; the use of drums and other percussion instruments such as the rattle and iron gong in religious rites; these again are elements which all slaves in Haiti, no matter what their tribal affiliations, had in common.

Nevertheless, as one studies Haitian folk-custom and folk-belief today, recognizable survivals of traits from the cultures of all the tribes that have been named are not to be found in anything approaching a comparable degree. Little of Senegalese practice is to be seen at present, while similarly, at least in the valley of Mirebalais, far less Congo derivatives can be discerned than would be expected when the vast number of Congo slaves imported into Haiti are recalled. Practically no traces of Gold Coast or Ivory Coast custom and belief are discoverable; the word "Ibo" appears from time to time; and several Ibo gods are worshipped; Nago deities, as will be seen,

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manifest themselves in large number. The majority of African traits, however, derive from the geographical center of the slaving area, especially from the region of Dahomey. Even the famous word "voodoo" is Dahomean, as all Haitian writers and some Europeans and Americans have recognized. Whatever its meaning in Haiti at the present time, its derivation is clear. It is the *vodun* of the Fõn-speaking people,—a word which is best translated as "god." Names of gods, and social and economic institutions, point their origin to this same Dahomean source. This being the case, it may be well to give a general description of the civilization of these Dahomeans, as an aid in the interpretation of the various phases of Haitian peasant life which are to be considered in the ensuing pages.[6]

In their basic attitude toward life the people of Dahomey have achieved a blend between co-operation and competition. Living in a society which, from before the time of contact with the Europeans, had a pecuniary base, with its resulting competitive drives, the desire to gain wealth both as an end in itself and for the prestige to be derived from its display is outstanding in native psychology. At the same time, and most particularly in the field of production, co-operative endeavor is to be found throughout the kingdom. As with all West African folk, agriculture is the most important element in Dahomean economy. Other forms of production are iron-working, brass-casting, weaving of cotton and raffia cloth, the making of appliquéd designs on ceremonial cloths, and the manufacture of pottery.

A large part of the heavy labor in Dahomey is done by means of the co-operative groups known by the term *dokpwe*. These associations not only clear the fields, but do the strenuous work of erecting walls for houses and compound enclosures and of thatching. When work is to be done, the one who is in need of the services of a *dokpwe* goes to the chief and arranges for the men to work for him on a given day. If he

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in descent, so there were "colored" folk who were slaves. As time went on, the lighter-colored slaves were usually employed as house-servants rather than field-hands, bringing about a continuous dilution of the Negro blood that flowed in these strains, and a lightening of their skins. And such was the prestige attached to light color that the mixed-bloods, even though slaves, felt themselves superior to free Negroes of undiluted African stock. This attitude derived from the fact that the lighter slaves were most often manumitted, particularly if they were the children of their owners, and that in other situations, when as slaves they gained the favor of their masters, they were permitted to engage in some remunerative enterprise with the proceeds of which they eventually might purchase their own freedom. These free people of color, or *affranchis*, formed an important part of the Haitian population in pre-Revolutionary times,[13] and played a principal role in the development of Haitian culture. It was through them that European civilization flowed, since because of the closeness of their contacts with the whites they were the instrument by means of which the aboriginal African heritage of the slaves was modified to produce the forms in which it is found in Haiti today.[14]

Yet for all the importance of the freed mixed-bloods in the attainment of Haitian independence and in the fixing of the patterns of Haitian culture, they, like the whites, were but relatively few in number, their strength being but from five to ten per cent of that of slaves.[14] In attempting to analyze the manner in which the present amalgam that is the civilization of Haiti was formed, it is consequently necessary to revert to a consideration of those who were in the majority, the full-blooded Negroes. The tribes from which these Negroes were principally derived have been indicated, together with the outlines of the civilizations of the region of Africa from which they were drawn. To this must be added, as has been for the whites with whom they came in contact, an analysis of the so-

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cial classes to which they belonged, as well as the circumstances of their enslavement, their treatment in Africa before shipment to the New World and during the voyage, their initiation into their new mode of life, and the manner in which they lived as slaves, since all of these facts had considerable bearing on the processes which shaped the behavior of their descendants who now inhabit the island.

The integrated political organization of West Africa has been described, as well as the important fact that the class stratification in that region was almost as fixed and its social implications almost as far-reaching as in France. Even the early writers recognized that not all slaves came from the same ranks of society, just as they understood that there were various ways in which enslavement could be achieved. Père Labat, who lived in the West Indies for many years, listed four classes from which slaves were drawn. First, he says, were those whose punishments against native law had been commuted to perpetual banishment — that is, to slavery " for the private profit of the kings "; second were the prisoners of war; third were those who, already the slaves of native princes or of those persons to whom they had been given by these princes, were sold to meet the need of their masters for money; while fourth, comprising the greatest proportion of the slaves, were those snatched from their homes by the marauding bands of robbers who, with the connivance of native rulers, carried on these raids to satisfy the demands of the European dealers.[15] This classification and others of the period, though generally accepted and repeated by later writers, tells little concerning the ranks of society from which the slaves were drawn, except as this may be inferred. For this one must go to present-day West Africa, where a lively tradition of the slave-trade has survived and offers valuable supplementary information.[16]

In the light of the existing traditions in Dahomey and Nigeria, it is evident that from the point of view of the African, Labat's four classes must be compressed into two — the

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"The Mina Negroes have even been seen to recognize princes of their country . . . prostrating themselves at their feet and rendering them that homage whose contrast to the state of servitude to which these princes have been reduced in the colony offers a striking enough instance of the instability of human greatness." [17]

Yet another group of Africans played a significant role in determining the trends Haitian Negro culture was to take. It is a commonplace among those who have studied New World Negro life that African religion has shown greater resistance to white influence than any other phase of African culture. And to explain this one must again turn to native African tradition. The beginnings of the West African monarchies, whose ruling dynasties eventually came to command great stretches of land, were in tiny principalities that continually "warred" against each other. Tradition has it that the most intransigent of the conquered were the priests of the indigenous local cults, who, because of their activities, were punished with what native idiom still terms "banishment." In the New World these intractable priests continued their rites for their fellow-slaves and instructed the next generation so their knowledge would not be lost to the people. Before their enslavement they had been men of power and influence, and this pattern, carried over in all its strength in the New World, continued them and their descendants as natural leaders. Hence, wherever the opportunity presented itself to strike for liberty, they invoked the spiritual forces to reinforce the power and courage of the military leaders who, like them, had been sold into slavery because their countries had been conquered, or because they had rebelled against the succession in their own lands.

The composition of the slave population as inferred from these traditions is thus seen to be somewhat different from

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3

that commonly assumed, since the conclusion is inescapable that, if anything, the slaves formed a group whose aboriginal types showed a weighting on the upper end of the African social scale rather than an overwhelming proportion of the less desirable members of society. Such an assumption goes far in explaining how the "slave psychology" generally attributed to Negroes of the New World was anything but a real part of their inner lives, and makes as well for an understanding of the extent to which the Negroes suffered their slavery with a constantly active discontent that is rarely given proper recognition in the study of the history of the period, and to which the drive toward freedom and the traditions of their native land were kept alive despite the restraints imposed by the masters.

Once in the net of the slavers, however, the status of any individual mattered but little, for to the European dealers each Negro was but an added unit of cargo. All last traces of his dignity as a human being were taken from him;[18] in the grants for earlier slaving operations, and in the manifests of the ships of that time, slaves were not even invoiced as human beings, but as "pieces of the Indies" — fractions of the perfect slave, who was conceived as having a height of seven *quartas* of a little more than ten inches each. Under this practice, the stature of each slave, child or adult, having been recorded, the total length of the members of the cargo was divided by the requisite number, and thus reduced to so many of these "pieces of the Indies," the actual number of human beings in the cargo not figuring.[19]

It is unnecessary to detail the horrors of the passage to the New World, for the story has been too often told. One can but conjecture what its effect on those subjected to it must have been, especially when it is viewed as an introduction to their contact with the Europeans who were to be their masters. That the mortality on the voyage was high is well known, but death encountered while the shackled slaves passed the dan-

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correctness of her view, while making an honest avowal of her inability to explain how this came about. On another occasion discussion turned upon the manner in which the powers of these supernatural beings are conceived in various parts of Haiti. Said one *hungan:* " Twins are stronger than the saints (the *loa*). The *marassa* are the mothers of the saints. So it is said at Arcahaie." The reply came: " In Mirebalais they say the saints are stronger."

During a lively discussion of the point by a group of active voduists the suggestion was made by one that the relative power of the *loa,* the dead, and the twins might be determined if the numerical strength of the following of each cult could be roughly ascertained. Since all give sacrifices for the dead — even strict Church members — and all who worship the *loa* give for the *loa* and the dead, while only some of this latter group give for the *loa,* the twins, and the dead, the person who had suggested this line of inquiry concluded that the dead were therefore strongest, because no one dared ignore them. Still another opinion, though in agreement with this, was based rather on the fact that the *loa* always exhibit fear before manifestations of death, as at dances where persons possessed by Damballa or Aida Wedo avoid those possessed by Gede, since he stands so close to the dead. However, it was pointed out by others in Mirebalais that the most costly and elaborate offerings are for the *loa,* that those for the dead are smaller, and those given the twins are least impressive, which was evidence enough for them that the *loa* are the most powerful of these three categories. All agreed, however, in ascribing to the twins the least power of the three, though what the *marassa* do for good or evil they do with intensity and dispatch.

There is ample justification, on both theological and historical grounds, for placing twins and the dead in a single general category. For, as one educated Haitian put it in pointing out that both twins and dead are worshipped on the same day, "*Marassa et morts font une chapitre pour nous* — The twins and the dead make a single chapter for us."

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twins and the dead make a single chapter for us." This point of view is supported by a study of the twin cult as found in that part of West Africa from which so much of Haitian culture came, where a single category of the supernatural world, comprising all ancestors, includes both twins and the dead, as well as all others "who have passed through the womb of a woman." As might be expected, the concept is more elaborated in West Africa than in Haiti; but the important point is that in Haiti, though less explicitly formulated, it has persisted.

To worship twins it is not necessary either for a family to number them among its members of this generation, or to have included them within the memory of those living, for it is sufficient if a tradition exists that twins had once been born to some member of the family. If the twins are alive or lived in recent times, sacrifices are given both at Christmas and at harvest time; otherwise only at Christmas. Some families, indeed, worship twins because a *hungan* has divined that their unknown ancestors in "Guinée" had included them. There are still others who decide to worship the *marassa* without the advice of a diviner, because certain benefits are believed to come to those who worship twins, because of their power for good or evil.[1]

The source of this power is vague; one characteristic answer to a question concerning it was: "Their power comes from God. Do we ourselves know how twins are made?" It is agreed, however, that St. Nicholas is their spiritual father —an opinion based on the tale of this saint, held to have been a sorcerer who, in very early times, killed three *marassa* (the twins themselves and the *dosu*, or child after twins) and salted them away in a barrel. The mother of the children came to him to offer up her prayers, and, touched by her sorrow, he resuscitated them, since when he has been their "father." The power of twins, whatever its source, is very real to the Haitians. They are believed to be able to predict rain, for ex-

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Boulicha Nago, or Boulicha of the Nagos; Èzilie Wèdo and Èzilie Doba, possibly from Wèdo and Doba in Dahomey; Tijean Pied Chèche (Tijean Dry Feet), a loa of bad character, "dry feet" signifying malevolence; and Legba Grand Chimin, or Legba of the Highway.

Identification of loa is often made difficult by the use of the generic or family title only. The term Nago covers all the loa associated with this "nation" (Nago Piment, Amine Nago, Boulicha Nago, etc.), but in a song or service any one of them is as likely as not to be referred to simply as Nago, with no clue to his exact identity. Each listener takes the name to designate the Nago loa with whom he is most familiar, unless possession occurs and the loa is otherwise identified by the behavior of his "horse."

On the whole, it appears that there was in the beginning a strong awareness of regional origins. There are names among the cult pantheons which indicate Senegal, Dahomey, Nigeria, Congo, and Angola origins. Many loa bear the names of African towns. Among the Ogoun family of loa, for example, are such regional designations as Badagry and Jèkkè, the first being a town in Nigeria and the second in Dahomey. It is clear that a detailed geographical knowledge of certain West African regions would considerably illuminate a study of Haitian loa.

Local shrines, too, doubtless enter into the naming system. Badagry is the name of a town in Nigeria, and it is also a Dahomean word designating the structure in which young men used to be circumcised and initiated into the secrets of warriors. In this particular light, the loa Ogoun Badagry might be regarded as the deity of that particular ritual center.

In discussing the complicated relationship of their loa, Haitians sometimes say: "There are seven of everything. There are seven Marassas, seven Ogouns, seven Èzilies. There are seven brothers and sisters in every family of loa." Or they say something such as: "There is only one Legba, but there are seven. There is only one Ogoun, but he has many moods and names. There is only one Èzilie, but she has seven faces." This concept is also held by the Arara (Arada) cult of Cuba. It is interesting to note the extent to which duplications and new generations of loa have been set up into family households in the most literal sense. Those families are still growing. In the Gèdé family I have counted more than thirty seemingly distinct individuals (see Appendix I)[1/1] Herskovits mentions a number of others, and still more have been cited by other writers on the subject. When I pointed out to some Haitians that the Gèdé family numbered far more than seven individuals, they were unable to account for the situation. Other Haitians took the vast army of Gèdés as a matter of course. The Ogoun family, too, is large and growing. Twenty-seven Ogouns are listed in the compilation in Appendix I. Still more have been recorded elsewhere.

[1/1] [See p. 317ff., Category 116.--Analyst]

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764 invoked the loa, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn, and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

793 764 766 In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the hounfor before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . . [823] The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.[17]

766 ● 174 761 But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."[18] It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by lightning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom 171 766 761 of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity [174] Chango. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude prevails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

> If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and cult-members of these deities. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any [768] of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived [784] is allowed to go to ruin, an *asan* of palm fronds being placed around it to guard [824] against anyone entering it. The moveable property of such a man, his clothes, his stools, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .[19]

766 The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies

17 [Simpson, OP. Cit., P. 161. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
18 [Leyburn, The Haitian People, P. 156. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
19 [Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 398. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

beyond the obvious fear of contagion. In his study of Dahomey, Herskovits notes:

> . . . Small-pox is believed to be sent as a punishment for grave offenses in the eyes of these [the Sagbata] deities, and it is taken to indicate that either the dead person himself or a member of his family has committed some heinous crime such as the practice of black magic. A person who dies of small-pox may only be buried after permission has been given by the chief priest of the Earth cult.[20]

Thus, in Haiti, though the connections with the past are clouded, it is clear that victims of lightning and smallpox are treated as a special class of criminals or malefactors.

Ordinary malefactors such as malevolent criminals and murderers—until recent years, at least—were not buried in the common graveyard. They, too, were segregated at the periphery of the cemetery or buried at the edge of a trail or road where the traffic would not permit them to rest and where their graves would be under constant surveillance. The roadside grave sometimes was also the fate of a person killed by lightning.

That these special burials are related to the Dahomean and Yoruban concepts of retribution for crimes against the deities is supported by the similarity of treatment accorded victims of lightning and disease and common criminals. In Haiti, Herskovits observes: "Those who die of small-pox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard," the suicides and criminals being set apart from the others.[21]

Graves found near the seashore, lake shores, or riverbanks frequently are declared to belong to persons who died of drowning.

Approximately nine days after a person's death, the "last prayers" are said, and the soul of the deceased is presumed to have departed from the house. Once more, under the tonnelle outside there are games, storytelling, and singing. On this night, however, there is also drumming and dancing of a special kind. Usually it is the Juba, or Martinique, dance, which is believed to be specially enjoyed by the dead, and it is the older people, rather than the young, who participate. These festivities are believed to give cheer to the deceased and to "encourage" him on his way. On the next night comes the mangé mort, the feast for the family dead, a ritual which continues periodically through the years.

Sometimes in Haiti you may come upon an old tomb or grave before which a dish of specially prepared food has been set. This is part of the mangé mort ritual.

A man may make provision in advance of his death for the rites which follow his burial. He may designate special animals to be killed, leave

[20] [Ibid., pp. 397–398. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[21] [Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, p. 214. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[P.166]

15. Secret-Society Songs

575 Secret societies were once common in Haiti, as they were in other parts of
191 the New World where West Africans settled in large numbers. The institution of the secret society was strong in various parts of West Africa from which the slaves came. The tradition was particularly notable among the tribes of Nigeria. In the New World it offered to slaves and to freed Negroes an opportunity for social organization and fraternal relationships which otherwise had been pretty well shattered by the nature of slavery and the profuse admixture of cultures. A number of elderly Haitians have
[648] suggested that it was the Haitian secret societies rather than the Vodoun and Congo cults which fomented underground resistance and slave revolts against the French in the last years of the eighteenth century.

● 174 At this late date it is difficult to reconstruct much of the secret-society
178 picture. Such groups as may have survived until recently did so in vitiated
575 and changed form. They have been supplanted in large measure by the
[476] *société*, a kind of mutual-aid association with both economic and recreational functions. It is exclusive, but not irrevocably so, and it is not secret. The société often corresponds roughly with the membership of a hounfor, or cult temple.

575 Old people still talk about true secret societies, however. There was a
178 Moundongue secret society, separate from the Moundongue cult, whose
266 members were recruited from the survivors of the Moundongue tribe and
193 their descendants. Other secret societies were not based on tribal affiliation but were recruited from the population at large. One such group was the Vinbindingue, also known as the Blinbindingue and the Balbindingue. Its practices were feared. According to tradition, the Vinbindingue was predatory and held cannibalistic rites, as did other groups such as the Moundongue Society, the Cochon Rouge (the Red Pig Society), the Zeaubeaups, the Cochon Gris (the Gray Pig Society), and the Calinda
000 Society. How much of their reputation for cannibalism was deserved is

[Herskovits, Dahomey, I, P. 256. Cf. P. 353, Category 116. -- Analyst]

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Except for the "aperture for the escape of the sound," the Bongo instrument is identical with the Haitian earth bow. The resemblance of the instrument to a spring snare strongly suggests that it may have been developed from some such device for catching game. This possibility is strengthened by the use of the earth bow among certain of the Bambarra hunters of the French Sudan as a game lure, the music played upon it being thought to have magical properties to attract animals to the region of the hunt.[9] A "portable" type of spring snare used among the Ashanti of Ghana is strikingly similar in form to the Haitian "portable" earth bow (see fig. 80).[9]

This instrument has survived not only in Haiti but in the United States as well. The washtub device that is an important part of American Negro folk music is a clear development of the earth bow. The washtub is inverted and a cord is attached to the tin bottom. The other end of the cord is fastened to a stick which is braced against the lip of the bottom side of the tub. The stick and the cord are manipulated precisely like the Haitian and African instruments. There is implicit evidence that the role of the washtub has been taken over in modern jazz orchestras by the double-bass fiddle.

Another device of African provenience is the Haitian *marimba* (also called *malimba*, *manimba*, and *marimbula*). It consists of a wooden box upon which a series of metal strips is mounted in such a way that they may be plucked with the fingers. In the face of the box, directly behind the keys, there is an aperture to permit the escape of the sound. The number of keys varies from three to seven or more, though some of them may produce duplicate tones. The instrument is usually about the size of a soap box. The musician sits upon it, facing the same way as the keyboard, and plays with his hands between his knees. The marimba is used for carnival music and for dances of the secular types, frequently in combination with a guitar, claves, and a cha-cha. It is a West Indian development of the small African *m'bila* or *sansa*, or "thumb piano." Several examples of the smaller instruments played with the thumbs have been found elsewhere in the West Indies, notably in Cuba,[10] and large forms of the sansa have been reported in recent years in Africa.

Among the instruments more or less restricted to religious service are whistles and small hand bells, which are used for invoking and saluting the loa and the dead. *Canaries* (large clay water vessels) also enter into ritual use. They are sung into, tapped with sticks, and on some occasions are covered with goatskin heads and played like a drum.

[9] [Fig 80 appears on p. 112-55. -- Analyst]
[Informant: Sobi has Tore, Bamako. Cf. p. 354, [115]
[10] category 116. -- Analyst]
[See Courlander, Op. Cit., p. 239. Cf. p. 354 cat. 116. -- Analyst]

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[7.349]

Notes

Chapter 1: *The Making of the Haitian* (pp. 1-7)

[1]The name Ginda survives in Haiti as the name of a deity.

[2]Herskovits, in *The Myth of the Negro Past* (p. 47), provides a tabulation of raw data found in the manifests recorded for slaves shipped to Virginia between 1700 and 1769: 20,564 slaves were reported shipped from "Africa," 3,652 from Gambia, 6,777 from "Guinea," 9,224 from Calabar, 3,800 from Angola, and 1,911 from Madagascar. Of those shipped from the island of Madagascar, 473 were listed as coming from Mozambique.

[3]Bartolomé de Las Casas.

Chapter 2: *Man and the Universe: Vodoun* (pp. 8-18)

[1]See Courlander, *Haiti Singing*, p. 3.

[2]Schweinfurth in *The Heart of Africa*, II, 32, says: "In Loango all exercises and endeavors are called gangu." Leo Wiener, in *Africa and the Discovery of America* (Philadelphia: Innes and Sons, 1922), III, 32, reports: "Forms of gango have in Puvis the meaning 'medicine' but also 'magic'—such as Nyika gango and Xango ngango."

[3]Gayer, *Afrika Dances*, p. 120; Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 208 ff.

[4]From the Fon *hwan-su* or *hwan-su*. Among the Arada of Dahomey a *hwan-su* was regarded as a spiritual wife of the deity. She was a servant of the cult temple, and in some instances a wife of the cult priest.

[5]Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, pp. 57-59.

[6]Deren, in her *Divine Horsemen* (pp. 119 ff.), gives an excellent report of a service for Agwé in a boat at sea. Aubin (*op. cit.*, p. 108) seems to have given the first description of this service at sea for the loa Agwé.

[7]Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 119.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 123. Leyburn advances the theory that Vodoun developed during this period as a result of the vacuum left by the Church. Although the Church did in effect leave the field to the African cults, one must assume that the Arada, Congo, and other cults were already organized and powerful of great vitality before the Haitian revolution. Implicit evidence points to a continuity of cult life from the earliest days of the African on Haitian soil. There are no statistics to reveal the extent of cult membership at the end of the eighteenth century, but the content and form of Vodoun today are so overwhelmingly African that it is difficult to think of Haitian cult activity as the product of a renaissance.

Chapter 3: *The Loa: Gods of the Haitian Mountains* (pp. 19-29)

[1]The term *vodoun*, used in this peculiar sense, conforms to the original Fon (Dahomean) usage. The term *hounsi*, also of Fon origin, signifies "spirit" and belongs to the same root

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Nor is it sufficient to label *Duvalierisme* "pathological" or "paranoid." The roots of this ideology are to be found in Haiti, not elsewhere; its supporters are the product of Haitian times and ideas; and their social identity, while not entirely clear, would probably pose few enigmas if enough data were available.* In order to make clear these assertions, however, it is necessary to look again at Haitian society, the Haitian society Leyburn has described so well, and to reexamine the terms that have been used by him and by others to describe it.

Though the societies of the Caribbean Sea differ significantly from each other, many of them share certain general historical experiences. Unlike the colonial areas of the Old World, these islands were largely populated from abroad, and in this regard they resemble the Atlantic lowland areas of mainland America. However, the colonial history of the islands meant that they would long remain the instruments of policy formulated in foreign capitals. Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and other islands were, during most of their postconquest history, the outposts of far-flung colonial empires, and the design of their societies was conditioned by this dependence and subjugation. As "plantation islands," their agriculture, demography, mode of settlement, and social structure were attuned to metropolitan needs and objectives. Unlike most of Africa and Asia, the Antilles lost their native populations almost entirely, owing to enslavement, overwork, disease, and war, early in the era of conquest and settlement. There remained the vestiges of native traditions, assimilated into the new, growing cultures of the postconquest period. The Indians themselves, wherever they were able to survive, were also assimilated through interbreeding with Old World migrants.

The newcomers came from Europe, Africa, and Asia, bringing with them what they could of their ancestral traditions, but never able to transfer their social heritages as intact bodies of belief and behavior. Hence the cultures of the new Caribbean societies were built up out of elements originating in many different places, while their social forms took shape under conditions of colonial control. The peoples of the islands were able to maintain some continuities with

* One interpreter of the Haitian political scene (Rotblum, 1960:243–48) has suggested that Leyburn's analysis of Haitian society as a "two-caste" system greatly influenced local political thinking by strengthening one idea: "the black intellectual must regain political power for the benefit of the country's majority."

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The people of the islands were able to maintain some continuity with the past, even while the new setting and changing conditions led to the development of certain innovations in society and culture. In a few Caribbean societies, Haiti included, freedom brought with it the opportunity to create a yeomanry—an independent, landholding class of agriculturists who produced most of their own consumption needs and also produced commodities for sale. These were "reconstituted yeomen," whose ways of life combined elements from the African and American Indian past, as well as considerable European and Asian influences, in new cultural constellations.

Haitian country folk are a particularly good example of such a historical process. The crops Haitian yeomen cultivate include the maize, sweet potatoes, and manioc of the indigenous American Indian (Taino) people, and other cultigens such as papaya and avocado which had been domesticated in mainland aboriginal America; and items like taro and mangoes from Oceania, sesame and sugarcane which originated in the Middle East and India, and vegetables from Europe. Their domestic animals, including cattle, swine, and fowls, are nearly all from the Old World. The chief agricultural tools—hoe, billhook, and dibble, which are well adapted to Haiti's shallow topsoil and hilly terrain—may be European or African in origin; the practice of burning off weeds before planting may be African or American Indian. In the case of each trait—crop, tool, practice—one is confronted by the diverse and entangled culture history of the Haitian people. What is true of agriculture is true of all else. The religion of Haiti is at once two religions rather than one: Catholicism *and* vodoun. Yet these two belief systems form a single ideology for most Haitians, particularly in the rural areas and among those of the urban lower classes. The Creole language is similarly complex in origin. While its lexicon is predominantly derived from French, parts of its syntax are not of Romance origin. For instance, the use of postpositive nominalizing particles and the absence of gender typify Haitian Creole, and are decidedly not Romance in character. Terminology shows much the same; for example, animal names and anatomical terms are mainly French in origin, but some cooked foods carry names of African provenience.

The "mixing" of various elements of culture from different traditions is, of course, neither uniquely Caribbean nor uniquely Haitian. All cultures are growths out of the past, and change by losing and gaining traits and by combining and recombining their substance in

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new ways. The virtual extirpation of indigenous culture, however, occurred in few areas outside the New World; it was particularly characteristic of the coastal and lowland areas of this hemisphere. Hence, Caribbean culture is almost entirely transplanted and recently synthesized. In the Caribbean area, an additional distinction lay in the persistently colonial character of the islands and in the effects of this colonialism on local life. Wherever the plantation flourished, large populations of African origin grew out of the original importations of slaves. This was true from the southern United States to Brazil, but was especially marked in the islands, where local populations of European extraction were either absent or reduced by the spread of the plantation. Only in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Santo Domingo, and in some of the smaller islands that developed no plantation system, were substantial proportions of Europeans to be found. In Haiti, the early cultural admixture of Colonial Spanish and Indian was soon swamped by the cultures of Africa, and the European cultural component became predominantly French after 1697, when the western third of Hispaniola—today's Haiti—was ceded to France.

But Haitian society did not come to be purely African, in any sense, nor is that society more than broadly similar to the other societies of the Caribbean. The kind of society in which the French masters and their African slaves met and mixed, and the subtropical, colonial environment in which they lived, imposed their own conditions for culture growth. What the Haitian people could keep as a living part out of the African past was limited by the regimen of slave plantation life; what they could borrow or copy from their masters was affected by the nature of the social relationships between those who held power and those who had to bend to it. Ultimately, independence meant that the Haitian people could employ what they already knew and practiced under slavery, but in a wholly new social setting.

The substantial isolation that followed independence led to slowed change, both social and cultural, and to the gradual spread of the yeoman way of life throughout rural Haiti. From 1804 until the United States occupation, Haiti was probably less affected by external developments than any other country in the hemisphere. In this regard, its social history is noticeably different from that of the other Caribbean islands, some of which, like Puerto Rico and Cuba, were forcibly brought back into the mainstream of world developments in the

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462 three hundred marketplaces serve the towns and countryside, some
443 of them patronized by thousands of buyers and sellers on market days. By participating in active small-scale trade, the wives of the yeomen contribute in a limited way to national economic efficiency and growth. As in all heavily agrarian economies marked by poor storage facilities, inferior transportation, and low consumer incomes there is considerable substitution of labor for capital, and there are high losses through spoilage. Except for the marketing of export commodities, much time is consumed in bargaining, in carrying, and in hand-processing of various sorts. But these activities are the accompaniments of the general low level of development of the Haitian economy, not one of its causes.

443 The economic challenges posed by agriculture on the one hand,
241 and by marketing on the other, differ significantly. Since these ac-
462 tivities are carried out predominantly along the lines of a sexual division of labor, the Haitian countrymen and their marketing wives
114 differ in some regards in their attitudes. Foreign observers of the
462 nineteenth century commented regularly on the industry and energy
174 of Haitian rural women, stressing their predominance in trade. Some
175 writers have attributed this convention to the West African tradition,
443 since women are the marketers, men the farmers, in many African
241 societies. Leyburn, however, notes that the militarism and political
433 unrest that have marked Haiti during so much of its history were serious impediments to peaceful trade. Women came to predominate in marketing, he theorizes, because men did what they could to avoid the towns, since they were often impressed into roving army bands if they traveled far from home. Whatever the historical causes may be, it has been established that the women of Haiti's countryside carry on most of the internal trade, while their husbands do most of the farming. These women, on the whole, know more about the towns, mix more easily with outsiders, and show more intrepidity in trade than the men show in agriculture. Yet it has been demonstrated that, for most of them, the scale of their enterprise is so modest and the economic opportunities open to them so restricted that their energy and daring can do little to increase the level of productive activity (Mintz, 1964:256–86).

47 Haiti's lack of large factories, mechanized production, and a skilled industrial labor force means that the country is unindustrialized by any usual measure.

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Vodun, therefore, show the Catholic influence, exerted in the main unconsciously.

Unlike the great religions, Vodun lacks a formal theology. As has been said, no seminary exists for the training of priests and priestesses, no congress or college of fathers states or amends the creed; there is no church court to discipline the individual enthusiast, or catechism for the young; no scriptures or sermons are printed or read to strengthen the faith. Vodun is an informal religion of action, not a formal one of reason. It flourishes because it is malleable, adaptive, suited to the needs of a people living close to nature and without education. To give a single lucid description of this Haitian folk religion, created as it is by everybody and by nobody, is about as possible as to give one description of home life, which varies according to the couple. We may, however, outline the common elements of creed and practice.

2. *Formative Days*

To say casually that Vodun is African in origin is to say little more than that it does not stem from the great world religions. There is no unity in Africa today; there was still less in the eighteenth century when slaves were being imported into Haiti. At that period it was possible to find a new dialect and a different set of folkways every few miles along the western seacoast. Two slaves from one geographical region (the Gold Coast, for example) might not understand each other or have the slightest predisposition to sympathize with each other's customs.

Colonial planters experimented with slaves from various regions in Africa, just as they might compare breeds of horses; setting tractability off against originality, brute strength against skill, intelligence against health. In this quest for a perfect slave, Negroes were imported from all parts of the Dark Continent, from Senegal in the northwest around the five thousand miles of seacoast to Mozambique and Madagascar in the east. Partly because trading conditions were more favorable in the Dahomey and Congo regions, and partly because the qualities of Dahomean and Congolese were preferred, Negroes from these two sections soon came to predominate over others in the colony. Whereas "Congo" was merely a geographical term, implying no community of feeling among the natives living

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175 567 along that river, Dahomey was the name of a powerful kingdom under a political administration which embraced a fair amount of interchange of ideas and similarity of social institutions, including religion.

175 567 178 Discretion made the planters separate slaves who knew each other, in order to minimize opportunities for revolt among them. This policy, although it prevented the rapid growth of "slave" customs, at the same time dispersed Dahomeans all over the colony; beliefs and practices held in common among the slaves were likely to take on a Dahomean cast. Since their work was directed, their freedom of movement limited, and their family life broken up, there was practically no opportunity for the outcropping of *any* African ideas relating to economic life, government, property, education, or marriage. The one sphere in which it was possible for Old World beliefs to continue was the religious. No slave dealer could penetrate the minds of his workers or silence their folk tales and folk songs in the evening when work was done; even the strictest plantation owners allowed dances in the slave quarters on Saturday nights and Sunday. It is the dance, a vital part of Dahomean religion, which seems to have formed the nucleus around which the diverse beliefs of African tribesmen grouped themselves, for it was a form of action which need not involve anything more than amusement or emotional release, if the participant were not religiously inclined. In the beginning, as Goethe observes, was the Act. To this simple Act of dancing, the Word, with thought behind it, could easily be added later. Practically all African tribesmen danced; and the numerous Dahomeans had a dance which was ostensibly for diversion but could be turned to a religious purpose as well.

175 178 796 771 535

771 171 174 Here, then, was the skeleton of a slave religion. Although every single African tribe had its own beliefs and ritual, each (so far as we know) had common elements with every other one. For example, all slaves, whether Senegalese or Angolese, believed in a multiplicity of spiritual beings, some of whom controlled the aspects of nature—lightning and storms, the sea, the sky. They thought that disease and other ill fortune came from spirits who must be placated in order to win back health and well-being. All felt that the normal course of events could be altered by magical spells, formulae, or charms; that one could bring misfortune to an enemy, luck to oneself, or ward off otherwise inevitable fate. Most of them had been accustomed to

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learn the properties of plants, both for healing and for poison. Except for the belief in spiritual beings, this folk knowledge would hardly have been classed as religious, for it was useful in every phase of daily life; the classification is that of the anthropologist, not of the simple black.

If Dahomean beliefs prevailed over others of African origin, it was chiefly because of the numerical preponderance of Dahomeans in the colony, together with the popularity of their religious dances. The Dahomean spirits or gods were Vodun; the dance in which the worshiper sought the inspiration of the spirits was a Vodun dance. Like all but the highly organized religions, this one recognized the validity of other beliefs. Its practitioners were not bigots. No hierarchy existed to keep out new accretions. Imperceptibly these were added to the original basic form: here an Arada spirit, there a Congolese prayer, and in many instances a Catholic saint, until the composite Vodun religion began to take shape.

There is no evidence that during colonial times Vodun was ever considered important by the white ruling class—certainly not as a faith. To most planters the word was the name for a vigorous dance. Judging from Moreau de Saint-Méry's description it was held openly enough, at times being witnessed by the whites as a sort of nocturnal diversion. Moreau knew, as did other whites, that there were "superstitious beliefs" connected with it, yet the offhand use of the word "superstition" was indication enough that the beliefs were not regarded as important. We have seen, however, what profitable use the slaves were able to make of the apparent innocence of their dances. When the idea of revolt began to germinate among them, gathering on each plantation at least once a week they had ample opportunity to hatch their plans. It is known that the campaign for revolt was developed partly under the stimulus of the Negro Boukman, a *houngan* or priest of Vodun. By means of drumbeats, which to the whites merely pounded out the rhythm for dancing but had for centuries been a means of communication at long distance in parts of West Africa, that ripening plot was telegraphed from one plantation to another. Even more important, perhaps, was the unity of feeling made possible, despite all incoherence of tradition and language, by the Vodun background.

The revolt of half a million slaves was a success. This fact has been rather too calmly accepted by historians of Saint-Domingue, who

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A gentle spirit may cause great harm to a person who neglects his commands, while a spirit whose power makes possible the most malignant magic may bring good fortune to his devotee. By conceiving his spirits as in manner and desires resembling himself, the Haitian can understand his little universe without subjecting himself to the bewilderment which faces a simple Christian trying to reconcile an all-loving Father with the obvious evil He allows on earth.

One must approach Vodun without the religious preconceptions of Christianity or Judaism. Suspending our notions of orthodoxy, monotheism, sin, heaven, and hell, we may examine more closely the creed suggested above, in an endeavor to round out its real meaning to the Haitian.

"I believe in gods and spirits . . ." The white man would recognize most easily among the Haitian's multiple gods the God of Christianity whom every Vodun worshiper confesses. It is this God who is meant in the homely expression of native acceptance of one's lot: "*Bon Dieu bon*"—the good God is really good, however remote. Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are likewise acknowledged, although it seems probable that they do not touch the hearts of people as much as the Great Master. The Blessed Virgin, on the other hand, is very real and near—so real, in fact, that she is sometimes actually merged with a spirit of African origin who has many of the Virgin's storied characteristics. Certain angels and a select group of Christian saints have made a special appeal and so found their niche in Vodun; others are not denied but merely ignored because the Haitian is not well acquainted with them.

To the spirits (one hesitates to use such misleading words as "gods" or "divinities") not drawn from Christianity the name "loa" is applied. There seem in general to be two classes of these: those who have an African origin, and those with a Haitian background only. The former group is called "Rada," the latter "Pétro." The word Rada is derived from the principality of Allada in Dahomey, and would seem thus to indicate that all the Rada loa were Dahomean; this, however, is definitely not the case. Numerous loa can be traced to the Congo region and others to the smaller West African districts, yet all of these are indiscriminately called Rada. In current usage, accordingly, the word has lost its strict geographical significance. The term Pétro is explained in an illuminating paragraph by the Haitian savant, Dr. Dorsainvil:

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The common people of Haiti are continually creating [his phrase is much more revealing: "en gestation de"] *loa*, or new Vodoun "saints." Popular tradition, long before independence, refers to a certain Don Pédro, a being of flesh and blood who from the Spanish end of the island had come at a certain period to live in the mountains of the commune of Petit-Goâve. This Don Pédro was the man who introduced into Haiti that violent dance which, by corruption, the people call "the pétro." Upon his death, Don Pédro came to occupy an honorable place in the Vodoun pantheon, bringing in his train a whole group of progeny, such as Jean-Philippe Pétro, Criminel Pétro, etc.[21]

As might be logically deduced, certain powerful ancestors become deified as Pétro loa.

It would require field trips into every district of Haiti to compile a full list of the various loa who receive homage from Haitians; some appear to have only a local following, others are honored over a wide district, and a few are reverenced throughout the country. If Vodun ever reached the stage of founding a seminary of sacred theology—a highly improbable event—one of its most imperative functions would be the collection, classification, and explanation of the attributes of the hundreds of loa, specifying whether they are Haitian or African in origin, Pétro or Rada, powerful or complaisant, inclined prevailingly to benevolence or to malice. Lacking such a proper catalogue, it will suffice to mention only the most commonly accepted figures. In reflecting upon the characteristics of these gods, the well-informed reader will be struck by the numerous parallels to divinities of other faiths so remote that Haitians could not possibly have known of them; similar emotional needs seem to produce similar deities to satisfy them.[22]

Legba is the name of the loa most frequently invoked, not because he is the most powerful, but because he is the interlocutor between man and his gods. Before any ceremony may begin, Legba is addressed: "*Papa Legba, ouvrí barrière pour nous.*" If he is not first worshiped, the other deities may not come to possess the people. Legba guards every door and gate, every highway and crossroads. He is still an important god in modern Dahomey, where his attributes are much the same as in Haiti. The people feel no necessity of

21. Dorsainvil, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

22. Classical anthropologists might have called this phenomenon "parallelism"; the word is accurate enough if only similarity, not identity, be understood.

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476 241 5-14 [527] day local practice dedicates to work in one's own fields—generally Monday or Tuesday. The prospect of working with one's fellows, of a midday feast with plentiful drink, of singing, talking, and hearing the news, is enough to induce most of the neighbors to come, even though the work will be hard. As with American log-rollings and house-raisings, there is a practical reason for accepting the invitation: by participating in other coumbites a man will be able to invite his neighbors to help him in his own larger tasks. The work is [461] done in rhythm[7] as on Southern road gangs in the United States, with one man specially designated to beat the drum, blow the conch, or sing a topical song, to set the pace. While the men are at work, the women prepare the noonday feast.

114 476 574 •174 171 178 241 This typical characteristic of Haitian rural life has been described in detail as it operates near the village of Mirebalais by Prof. Melville J. Herskovits. His contention is that the custom, in general and in detail, derives from Dahomey, West Africa, the home of many of the original slaves.[8] Although his evidence is impressive, there are nevertheless objections to it. Coöperative enterprise for tasks larger than one man can accomplish alone is common in the United States and in parts of Europe and South America, as well as in Africa. It is not an economic device which strikes one as requiring unusual inventiveness, for cases of it are common even where the participants have had no previous experience of it. Further, Dahomean practice could not have been kept up during slave days, nor yet during the régimes of Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, and Pétion. (The first three required forced labor under overseers, and landownership by peasants was still rare under Pétion, although a beginning had been made.) In the thirty years from 1790, when the last slaves arrived, until Christophe died in 1820, many old ways were certainly forgotten. Not a single one of the numerous books written by visitors during Boyer's quarter-century, 1818 to 1843, mentions the practice, which certainly must have struck Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Americans if it had been characteristic of the peasant life of the time. If one concludes that the coumbite did not become peasant practice until the mid-nineteenth century, all possibility of contact with Negroes familiar with Dahomean routine has disappeared. What

7. A Haitian poet, Charles F. Pressoir, entitles a book of his verses *Au Rythme des coumbites* (Port-au-Prince, 1933).
8. *Op. cit.*, chap. IV.

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remains is the verbal handing down of recollections, one of the most natural things in the world and one congenial to Haitian peasants. Every region, every village, has its accomplished storytellers. The phenomenal resemblances in detail of the coumbite to Dahomean coöperative work may be due therefore to this verbal tradition.

Once the men have cleared and prepared the field, the care of the crop devolves upon the women. For this there has been a long background of tradition. In African agricultural regions, in the plantations of Saint-Domingue during slave days, under the forced labor régimes of Toussaint and his successors, women had been field workers. They had never known anything else. We have seen that many of the present-day practices of Haiti go back to the times of Pétion and Boyer: during this period women did field work, not by decree of government but by force of circumstance. Their men were constantly taken away from the farms for service in the large army; if crops were to be raised, women must do the work. Sometimes soldiers were stationed near their own homes, and could help in production; but they could be called on to march, at short notice and in peacetime, anywhere in the country. Many of the later presidents made it a definite policy frequently to change the station of regiments, so as to prevent revolutionary projects and guard against the soldiers' being tampered with by the disaffected in any single community.

Sir Harry Johnston records his observations on the Haiti of 1910 as follows:

> The women are the best part of the nation. They are splendid, unremitting toilers. In the face of all discouragements with which a bad Government clouds their existence the women of Haiti remind one of certain patient types of ant or termite, who, as fast as you destroy their labour of months or days, hasten to repair it with unslackening energy. The market-women that descend from the country farms to the Haitian towns know that on their way to the market-place, and in that market-place, they will be robbed by soldiers and officers until the margin of profit on the sale of their wares has practically disappeared. Yet they continue to toil, to raise poultry and cattle, till the fields, see to their gardens, make pottery and mats. They cannot stop to reason, but must go on working from three years old to the end of their lives. Such industry (which is almost equally supplemented by that of the peasant husbands) protected should make Haiti one of the richest countries in the world for its size and population; but so long

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the men as well as the women work arduously. It seems justifiable to conclude that industry has not always been a characteristic of the Haitian male; and to ask why.

One valid reason is, of course, political. As we have seen, until the American Occupation Haiti was greatly overmilitarized. Almost every able-bodied male was at one time or another during his prime a soldier in the army. Since the bane of the country from 1804 to 1915 was its revolutions, there was room for a man to serve either in the regular army or, lured by future promises, in the guerrilla forces of a scheming general. To be drawn away from the land at the very moment of physical maturity was to predispose a youth against humdrum field work. As a soldier he traveled, knew excitement, was fed and clothed, and could loaf, except during battle. So schooled, upon retirement from the army a man was hardly disposed to settle down to steady labor. Even if as a young man he remained upon his farm, he might at any moment be called away to service, just when he was most needed for the crop. If Haiti was to be fed, the women, who alone were exempt from army service, provided the only available regular workers.

Tradition offers another explanation for masculine independence of hard work. The African background of female agricultural labor has been cited. In slavery the men had been degraded by being forced to do work of this sort, while the lot of women hardly differed from what it had been in the old country. Under Toussaint, Dessalines, and Christophe, with their large armies, women, already numerically preponderant, formed the vast majority of field workers. Independent small farming hardly changed the picture. African tradition, moreover, made the man master of his property and wives, the rôle of woman being that of man's inferior and useful servant.

Disease is another partial explanation. Until recently no one seems to have been aware of the prevalence in Haiti of such diseases as hookworm, malaria, and tuberculosis which, without necessarily affecting a person outwardly, may nevertheless sap his vitality, leaving him listless and worn out by even slight exertion. Obviously much of what was called laziness was due to disease. But the flaw in this reasoning is that illness makes no discrimination between the sexes. If men were disease-ridden, so were women: yet the latter were steadily industrious.

Any foray into possible psychological reasons is guesswork. It

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
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tions to the English language in the southern United States, where they were slaves for seventy years longer than in Haiti.

Common African economic ways yielded to the plantation system and slavery; the Negroes had no opportunity to govern themselves or settle their own disputes; they mated rather than married; their families might be broken up if the master wished to sell a slave. The one part of life in which they were permitted to follow unhindered their African ways was the intimate one of religion which, since it needed no buildings or organization, did not interfere with work, and could be entirely personal and private, was not suppressed. As has been pointed out, the Dahomean form of religion prevailed over all others and, modified, gained wide adherence among the slaves. It is precisely in Vodun that Créole has taken over its only important African words, such as Vodun, zombi, houngan, marassa, loa, houmfort, bocor, ouanga.

It would be erroneous to imply that the Negroes had no effect upon the language of which they soon became the predominant users.[6] Their operations were of a subtle sort, however. As with the Negroes of the United States, the letter "r" proved difficult, and often disappeared altogether, leaving many words softly slurred. "Marcher," for example, generally sounds as if it were *ma'ché*. Likewise in the course of years they gave the language their own accent, their own modulation and tone, which make Créole sound different on their lips from a white man's way of speaking it. Some scholars attribute this to a *racial* influence—that is, to the morphology of the Negro throat and tongue. It might be pointed out to the contrary that Americans, white like the English, have given the mother tongue *their* own accent, modulation, and tone. It has certainly not yet been proved that race has anything to do with speech.

Words in imitation of a sound grow up in every language. Several western African dialects, especially Mandingue, seemed fond of onomatopoeia; in Haiti, consequently, one hears many an expressive additional word. Moreau de Saint-Méry[7] noticed this in colonial Saint-Domingue, citing such cases as the addition of "*bap*" to the verb "*tomber*," if one had fallen down lightly, or "*boum*" if heavily;

6. Suzanne Sylvain, *Le Créole haïtien* (Wetteren, Belgium, 1936), p. 10, says that although the African contribution to Haitian Créole is generally considered to be slight, she has personally found 170 words of undeniable African origin, and feels sure that there are many more.

7. *Description . . . de . . . Saint-Domingue*, II, 36–37.